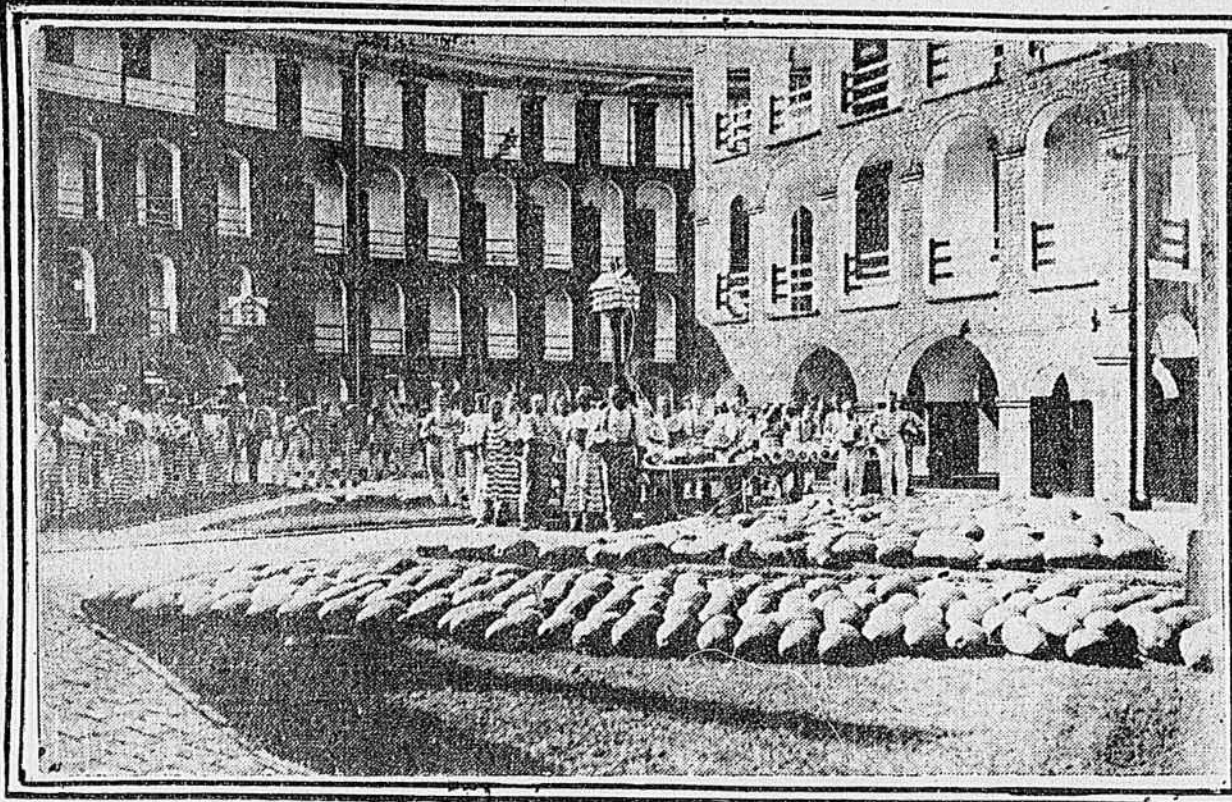
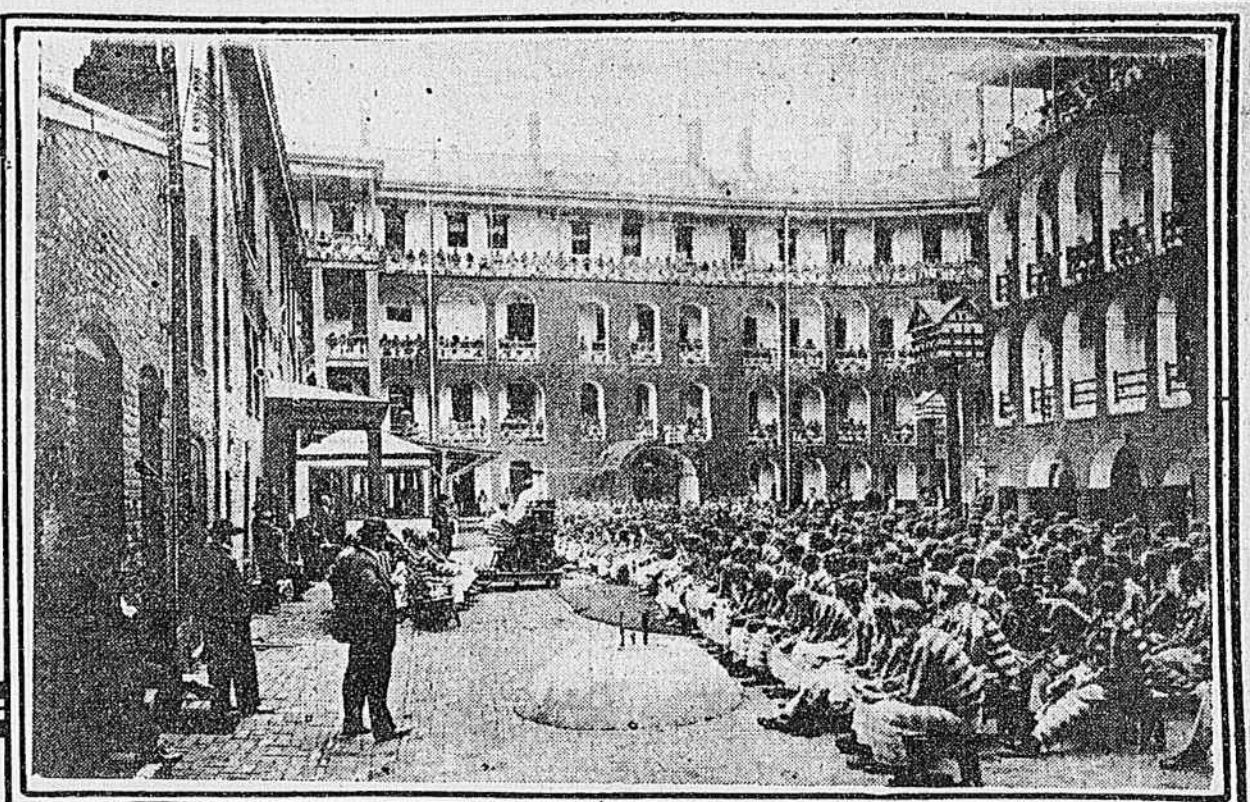


# CHRISTMAS TIME IN THE VIRGINIA STATE PENITENTIARY



WATERMELON FEAST AT PENITENTIARY.



MRS. MAUD BALLINGTON BOOTH ADDRESSING CONVICTS.

Commonwealth, unlike corporations, are permitted to have souls. They may show mercy in the tempering of justice; they may even show generosity. They may instill some joy into what they intend to be in the main a joyless life, and in so doing it is possible they may help to accomplish that true aim of modern penitentiaries—the reformation of the offender.

So it is that when Christmas comes, the men and women who are shut up in the State's great prison in expiation of their crimes—or, to throw a sop to the sociologist at once and be done with it, the crimes which their ancestry or their environment compelled them to commit—are not required to grind out the monotony of their daily lives at the shoe bench without some glimpse of holiday-making. The Commonwealth, in the proper persons of the board of directors and the superintendent, sees to it that some gleam of sunshine comes in and makes them realize that the world outside keeps the day and that the State does not wish to deprive its prisoners of even the thought of the season which makes the Christian world glad.

**All Share in Day.**  
It may well happen, then, that convicts immured behind walls surrounded by a man with a Corbould gun, will "take Christmas" more than they had a chance to at home when they were young. They may well have had empty stockings in years gone by—to go thus far and no farther into criminology—those empty stockings, with their concomitants, may have had something to do with the specific offenses which usually made these men outcasts from human society and which put upon them the brand of the criminal.

The nature of the work which the inmates do for the prison labor contractor has been so much in the public eye of late that it is probable most readers know already that the men are given set tasks. Accomplished, these tasks are regarded as sufficient energy expended for the State. In other hours, the men and women are at liberty to continue their labor in the making of shoes, and for this the shoe company pays them a wage. This money is their own property, to do with as they please in any lawful way not conflicting with the peace and good order of the State Penitentiary.

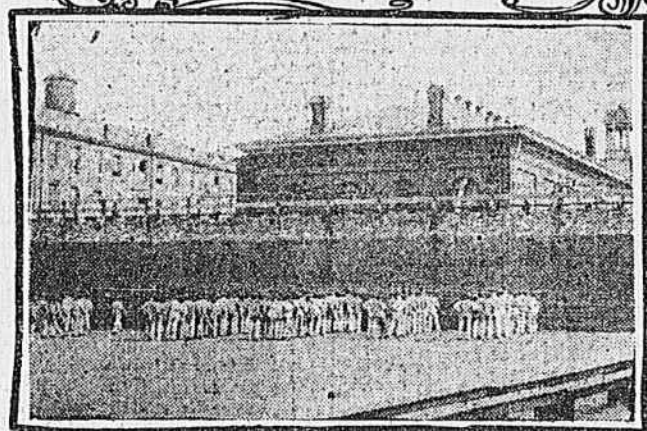
**May Make Money.**  
Men who are proficient in the tasks to which they have been set can soon surpass the quota expected of them. If they are industrious and continue to study the trade, they can earn a tidy sum, which they spend or save, according to the principles which they have learned from infancy, and just like the people outside do. Probably most of them spend it, but that is neither here nor there, nor, indeed, would they differ from the majority of free people in doing so.

Naturally, men who are ineffably thickheaded or who are sullenly wasteful or designedly incompetent, are not gilded by the shoe company. But it has to take them. It is unlikely that they are employed for cash.

When Christmas approaches some of these men who are earning actual money, which all in the shoe shops have a chance to do, begin to think of the people at home. Some of them have no people at home; some of those people at home prefer to forget the existence of those who have dragged



"JUDGMENT, MR. UNPURE."



ASSEMBLY AT WEST WALL.

the family name in the dust of his honor; some of them don't care. Perhaps a great majority prefer to use their money for themselves. But it is true that quite a number keep in close touch with home folks and buy presents for them at Christmas-tide. This has been going on for more than two weeks. Perhaps many a mother has wept and prayed over some remembrance bought by a wayward boy from the earnings of his own hands in extra labor at the penitentiary.

**Convicts "Send Out."**  
"Sending out" is a privilege greatly beloved by the prisoners. It is one not

to be despised, nor to be parted with lightly or unduly. Good behavior marks are especially valuable when this privilege is sought. Guards have done much work in the way of buying little presents in the shops of Richmond during the past week or two. The convicts may see them before they go out. They may know that the remembrances have been sent to their destinations.

But if many "send out" for presents for others, many more "send out" for delicacies for themselves. They buy sweet stuffs and fruits and anything within reason which they may wish. The money is theirs, and they may spend it just as, has been previously said, like folks on the outside do on that which is helpful or healthful or indigestible or harmless or harmful.

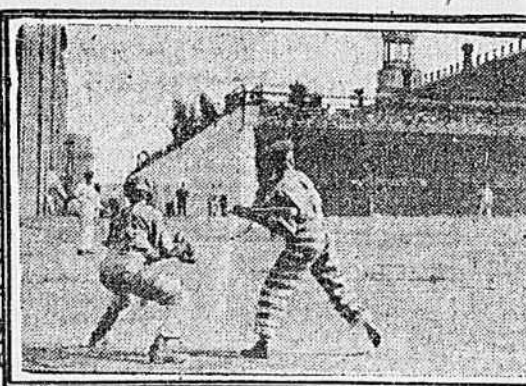
In the cells these little purchases add to the Christmas dinner of many a convict. They furnish conversation for the long hours of idleness and thoughts for wakeful moments.

**All Are Remembered.**  
Here comes in one of the acts which indicate that the Commonwealth of Virginia has a soul. There are many men who have no opportunity to earn money in the shoe shops. There are trustees, who work about the yards and garden and about the superintendent's house. There are men who stay in the general offices. There are men who assist the Bertillon clerk and who cook and who serve rations and do all manner of things. There are always men and women in the hospital.

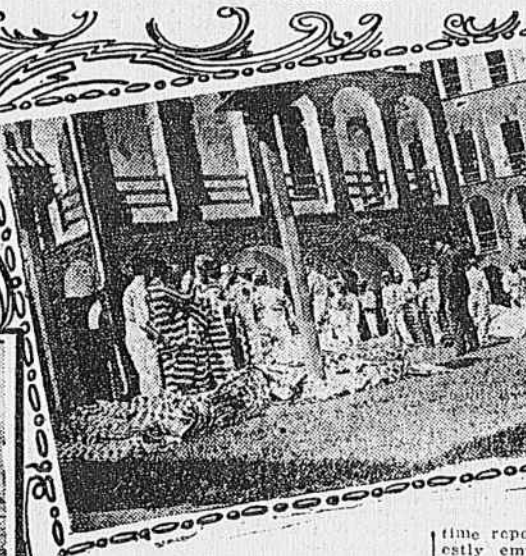
To these go small sums of money from the treasury of the penitentiary itself, by order of Superintendent James B. Wood, and with the consent of the directors. The amounts are not large—cannot be, in the nature of things—but they are enough to show that the State has an interest in the convicts and does not propose to withhold from them the small joys of Christmas-tide.

With this money the recipients "send out" and buy their presents or their delicacies and all somebody else's stockings or their own, as their sentiment or reason or inclination may point out.

And if Superintendent Wood extends this beneficence to some who have a chance to make money for themselves in the shoe shops, but who will not, it is unlikely that any one will be found who will blame him. Perhaps if he could look back for sev-



MAY BE "OVER THE WALL."



WASH DAY AT PRISON.

eral generations he would not hesitate to give, perhaps he knows it is not best to take the risk of adding fuel to a smoldering flame of hatred against all the world—not best for the convict or the State or for society at large.

**How They Are Fed.**  
And then the Christmas dinner. Lest the Commonwealth should pat itself on the back after having read what has gone before, and think itself a pretty good sort of fellow, let us remember that no dinner as such has ever been eaten in the State Penitentiary. For there is no dining room. Each man and woman must eat in his or her cell, whether it be the ordinary prison fare or the additional allowances for Christmas.

At the regular meal hours the long lines of convicts put out from the cell buildings. Each man carries his tin bucket, which is to hold his allowance of coffee. Into the yard these men file. And take their turn to be served from the big pots and piles of eatables out in the open courtyard. Soup is brought out in huge tubs, bread is packed on rough tables, meat is cut into portions, the whole making an almost unbelievable total to one unaccustomed to such things.

And it is all most uninviting. When one sees it for the first time he is likely to think that he would prefer starvation to such a diet, eaten in such a way. But if he examines closely he will see that everything is as clean as it is possible to make it, and that the officials do all that the Legislature allows them to do.

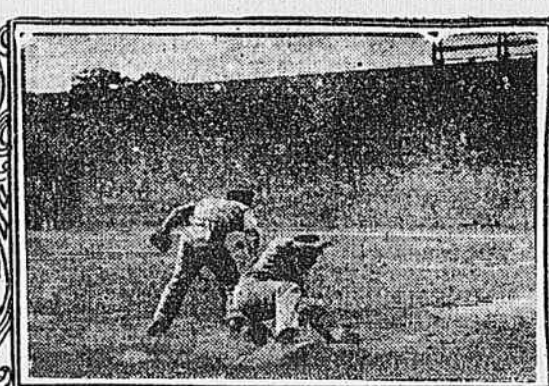
**Dining Room Needed.**  
Time after time the directors have urged upon the General Assembly the erection of a mess hall and kitchen at the State prison. In the report for 1909 to the Governor, the board said: "It is brutalizing to feed men like many animals. As they pass in line their men are handed out to them and they return to eat in the same cells in which they have slept and lived. It takes about twenty minutes for the line to pass, and in cold weather they return to their cells with their meals nearly, if not entirely, frozen. This is not conducive to good health."

"All of this can be done away with by feeding in a mess hall (as is the case in every up-to-date, well-conducted prison), and the saving in provisions makes it well worth while."

"The cooking is now done in the cellars, which were formerly used as dungeons, and from a healthful standpoint we feel that we cannot too strongly condemn this."

**Officers' Add Views.**  
In the report of Superintendent Morgan, to the board the same year, he said, summarizing the needs of the institution: "First, a dining room and kitchen, the need of which is so apparent to an thinking person as to require no explanation."

And Surgeon Carrington, at the same



SLIDE TO THIRD.

old prison. These three great needs have been so often brought to your attention, and you know so thoroughly how much good would be accomplished if the Legislature would make the necessary appropriations, that I feel it is only necessary to mention them."

**Extras for Dinner.**  
Now, the Christmas dinner will be something out of the ordinary, as it always is, and, of course, the convicts look forward to it. Turkey has for years past been too expensive a dish, but something choice, such as roast pork, which the convicts probably enjoy just as much, will be prepared, with extras in the way of vegetables.

So we have the festive season and its spirit. And we have the extra money—pending for the day. And we have the unusually good dinner.

Nobody knows what sort of temperature will prevail in Richmond on December 25, 1911. But if it should be cold, we have the official report of the board for it that the roast pork and the soup will be nearly, if not quite frozen before the convicts can get back with it into their cells.

Twenty minutes is a long time for bitterly cold air to work upon a collection of food in the outdoors, and the work of cooling necessarily sets in some minutes before the first lucky convict fills his pail and starts the

long line back toward the grim walls. The soup may be extra good and rich, but in a frozen state, or even when thoroughly chilled, it is not usually sought as an appetizing dish. Even roast pork loses some of its flavor when it gets cold, while as for coffee the convict who sits on his cot and imagines he is getting outside of a rich Christmas dinner would have to be possessed of all the powers of imagination which gifted a Poe or gifts a Robert W. Chambers when he depicts the women of to-day.

Perhaps in a few more years the Legislature will develop sufficient soul, or the Auditor may find sufficient money for the erection of a dining room and of a kitchen. Possibly the sensibilities of a criminal are not very acute, yet eating in a cell, sitting on a cot in which the night has been spent and in which he lives, might even grate on the feelings of the lowest, until he has spent a few years in getting acclimated and until his stomach ceases to rebel.

**Saw Aero Flights.**  
Only once in several years have all the convicts been assembled at one time. That was during Thanksgiving week of 1910, when the Molants gave exhibition flights in Richmond. Then they were all brought into the yard and lined up, watching for the flight over the penitentiary which had been promised. To them it seemed—as indeed was the case with the outside world—that the appearance of men in the air, going as they pleased, was the beginning of an era. The men watched the flight with the keenest interest.

Christmas of 1911 will be like those which have preceded it. Some sort of performance will be secured, probably of a vaudeville nature. And the "sending out" is going on. And there will be something extra for dinner.

Anything which those on the outside want to "send in" to help is used to add to the convicts' Christmas.

Photographs on this page were taken by T. B. Kemp, chief clerk at the penitentiary. Mr. Kemp takes the keenest interest in the welfare of the convicts, and has taken numerous pictures of the men at work or at play. Through his administration of the Bertillon system, he has become proficient with the camera.

time reported: "I wish to again earnestly emphasize a great need for a decent kitchen and dining room and sanitary, up-to-date sewerage in the

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